



Downtown Evanston Revitalized
2007-2018
Robert B. Teska

Cover image credit: Patrick Hughes and Doug Hahn

DOWNTOWN EVANSTON REVITALIZED

2007-2018



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FOREWORD

The City of Evanston, along with Northwestern University, emerged in the latter half of the 19th century along the shore of Lake Michigan immediately north of the City of Chicago. Its diverse population grew rapidly as many urban residents were left homeless after the 1871 Great Chicago Fire and sought a more suburban lifestyle. A strong central business district developed with a market area reaching as far west as the Fox River communities in Illinois and as far north as Wisconsin.

Beginning in the 1950s the powerful nationwide movement of people and businesses to the suburbs was being evidenced and was captured in newspaper headlines and books, such as the classic Jane Jacobs publication of The Death and Life of Great American Cities in 1961. The death of traditional central business districts all over the nation was being forecasted, if not already underway. This trend was evidenced in Chicago and became a reality in Evanston when the Old Orchard regional shopping center opened in 1956, just three miles away in Skokie.

Evanston responded. **Downtown Evanston Revitalized, 1956-2006** was published on the internet by Teska Associates, Inc. in January, 2007 to tell that story (www.teskaassociates.com/DowntownEvanstonRevitalized). The most recent twelve years of events have added new chapters to that story. Hence, **Downtown Evanston Revitalized, 2007-2018**.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Teska Associates, Inc. (President Lee Brown) for its support and willingness to publish this new document on its website, many years after my retirement. The firm remains headquartered in Evanston and continues to provide its planning and design services to the community's revitalization efforts. Erin Cigliano, Senior Associate, and Amy Riseborough, Associate, deserve special thanks for taking my draft narrative and graphics and compiling them into a very readable and attractive format. By the way, all photos were taken by me except where noted, and I assume full responsibility if they fall short of "professional quality".

Also deserving thanks and praise is the extraordinary journalistic coverage given downtown revitalization in general, specific project design and development, public review, and negotiations between city agencies and developers. Much of the information in this book comes from such coverage in the *Evanston RoundTable*, the *Evanston Review*, and on-line *Evanston Now*. Personal conversations with Scott Mangum, Evanston Planning and Zoning Administrator, and Annie Coakley, Downtown Evanston Executive Director, have provided much appreciated up-to-date information on revitalization progress and what might be expected in coming years.

November, 2018

Chapter I

RECESSION + RECOVERY

With the 2006 opening of Sherman Plaza, completion of Sienna Phase I, City Council approval of the Mather Lifeways retirement community plan and the Carroll Properties 1881 Oak Avenue 18-story condominium plan, and construction of a new Church Street CTA viaduct, the momentum of downtown revitalization seemed to be assured well into the future. Even the developers of Sherman Plaza reflected this optimism when they submitted to the City in 2007 a proposal for mixed-use development of the Fountain Square Block, which included a 523-foot, 49-story condominium tower with businesses and parking on lower floors. Little did they or others suspect that later that year the economies of the U.S. and the world would be hit by the “Great Recession” which would severely jeopardize business, real estate development, jobs and home ownership for years to come.

Although not totally immune to such a dramatic turn of events, Evanston displayed its resiliency to such adverse impacts. Fortunately, the city’s diversity, including Northwestern University and other educational institutions, the healthcare industry, and the surprising tenacity of the dining and entertainment industry provided significant support for downtown during this stressful period until recovery emerged consistent with previous forecasts.



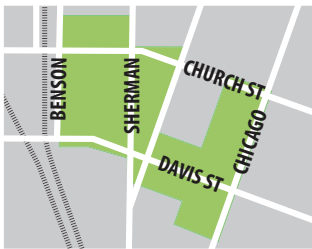
“The City’s diversity provided significant support for downtown during this stressful period of time.”

Chapter 2

PUBLIC SECTOR

WASHINGTON NATIONAL TIF

The Washington National Tax Increment Financing district was created in 1993 to broaden and diversify the tax base AND to strengthen Evanston's overall economy by helping to provide for expanded retail and development opportunities to be undertaken within the city. The TIF expired December 31, 2017.



NUMEROUS DEDICATED BIKEWAYS INSTALLED

Evanston has installed numerous dedicated bikeways, initially along Church and Davis Streets, then also along Chicago Avenue downtown.



In 2006 the City Council established a Downtown Planning Committee to work with a consultant, the Lakota Group, to prepare a new downtown plan. Following over a year of work and public input the plan was completed by the consultant, recommending three general areas of development (Downtown Core, Traditional Areas, and Transitional Areas) and a maximum by-right building height of 28 stories, with up to an additional 14 stories permitted as a bonus for specific benefits to the public. The Plan Commission, after review of the draft downtown plan, recommended a maximum height of 275 feet (23-24 stories).

The City Council approved the Downtown Plan in 2009, including eight new "form-based/incentive" zoning districts: 3 Core districts, 2 Downtown Transition districts, and 3 Residential Transition Districts. However, the plan and the form-based zoning regulations never received formal legal adoption. That same year, after extensive review and numerous public hearings (some contentious), the City Council approved the revised Klutznick-Fisher Development/Tim Anderson planned unit development proposal for the Fountain Square block (708 Church Street), with a maximum of 35 stories. The plan was designed by Chicago architect Larry Booth.

The Downtown II Tax Increment Finance project, covering much of downtown, was closed out on December 31, 2009. During the period 1985-2008 the assessed valuation of property in the TIF district had increased from \$1.8 million to \$145 million, clearly an economic success for the City.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC REALM

In the realm of "public improvements", the City initiated a plan to rebuild sidewalks in the downtown, revise the use of streets to include dedicated bikeways, and install new streetscape features. Church Street was the first to be improved; Davis Street followed, completed in 2015. In 2017 Chicago Avenue was improved to include a two lane (one in each direction) bike facility on the east side of the street, and separate traffic signals for cyclists were introduced. Also accomplished during this period was the installation of new CTA (Chicago Transit Authority) viaducts on Church Street and Grove Street.

ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Seven pieces of public art have been installed downtown over the past decade:

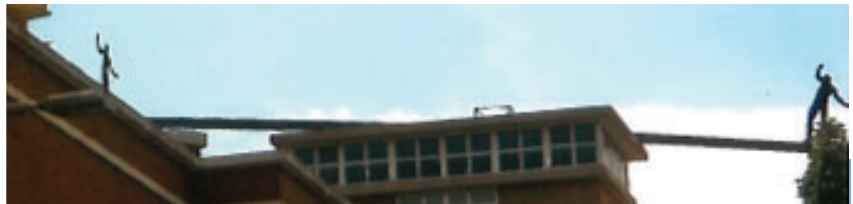
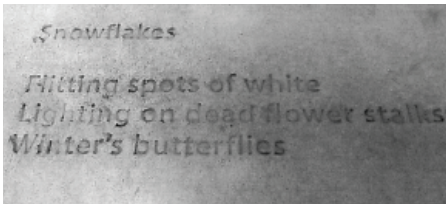
- *The Encounter*, designed by Hubertus von der Goltz and located on the roof of the Maple Avenue municipal parking garage;
- *Library Poem Project*, poems composed by Ethan Plant, Charlotte Hart, Toby Sachs, Susan Gundlach and Alicia Berneche and located in the sidewalk entrance to the Evanston Public Library;
- *Untitled*, designed by Shawn Bullen and installed on the Elmwood Avenue railroad abutment south of Davis Street as part of the Evanston Mural Arts Program (EMAPS);
- *Electroliner*, designed by Jack Weiss and installed along the Benson Avenue rail abutment;
- *Conversations: Here and Now*, designed by Indira Freitas Johnson and located at the northwest corner of Raymond Park;
- *Search & Effect*, a multimedia installation designed by the team of Krivanek+Breaux and located in the elevator tower of the Sherman Plaza Garage;
- *Justin Wynn Fund Mural*, designed by Lea Pinsky and Dustin Harris and located west of the L tracks on the north side of Davis Street at Maple Avenue;

EVANSTON MURAL ARTS PROGRAM

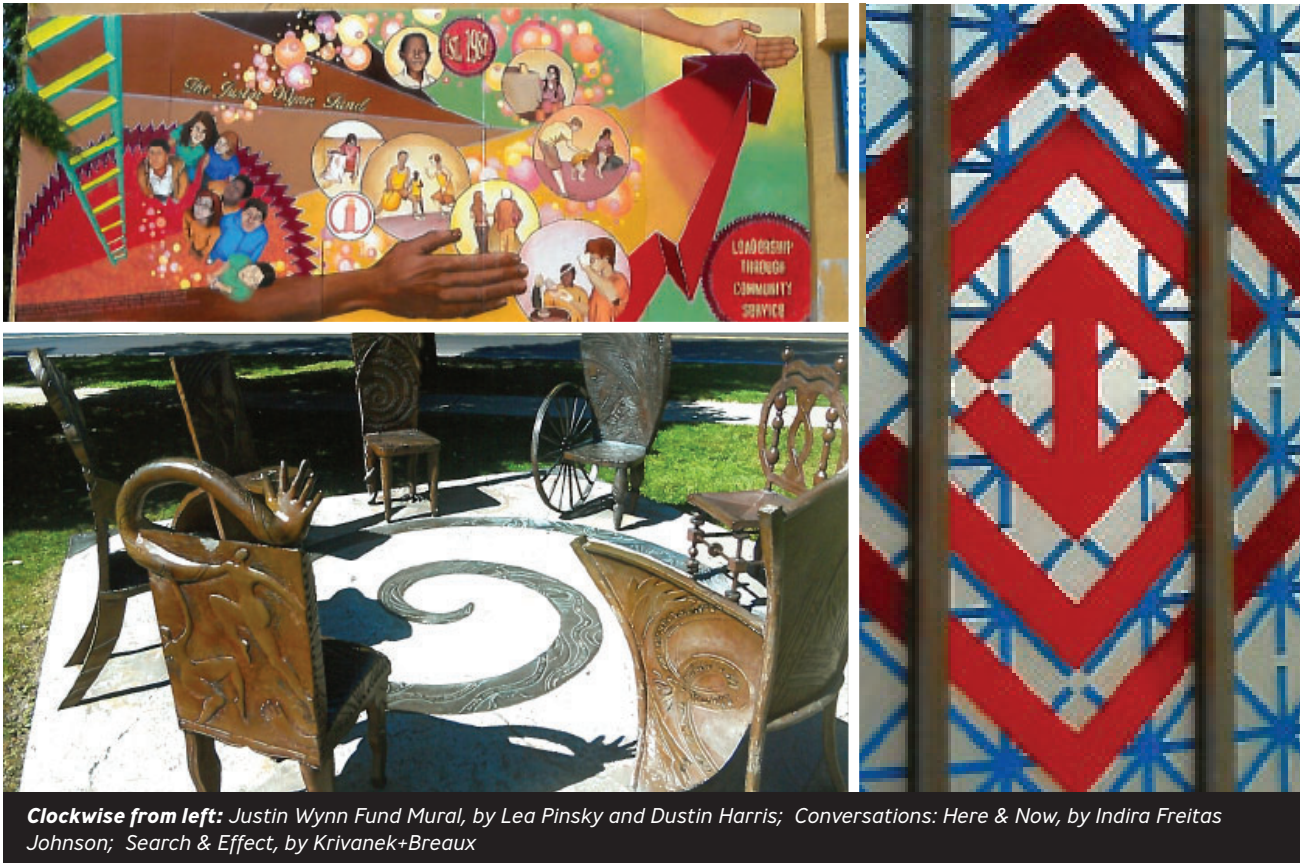
Evanston Mural Arts Program (EMAP) is a public art initiative launched in 2017 by Evanston-based non-profit Art Encounter, and run by Dustin Harris and Lea Pinsky. The program was launched to help local communities uplift their neighborhoods through mural art, working toward the shared goals of community enrichment, civic engagement, and beautification.



(image credit: artencounter.org)



Clockwise from left: *Library Poem Project* by Ethan Plant, Charlotte Hart, Toby Sachs, Susan Gundlach and Alicia Bernech; *The Encounter*, by Hubertus von der Goltz; *Electroliner*, by Jack Weiss; *Untitled*, by Shawn Bullen



Clockwise from left: Justin Wynn Fund Mural, by Lea Pinsky and Dustin Harris; Conversations: Here & Now, by Indra Freitas Johnson; Search & Effect, by Krivanek+Breaux

DIVVY ROLLS INTO EVANSTON

In the summer of 2016, thanks to a grant from the State of Illinois, Evanston launched 10 Divvy bike share stations throughout the City, including downtown, at Northwestern University, and at other locations throughout the city.



A BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

The Divvy rental bicycle system has become extremely popular in Chicago and many other major North American cities. Made possible by a grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation, Evanston and Oak Park became the first suburbs in the metropolitan area to participate in the system, beginning in July, 2016. There are 100 bikes and 10 bike share stations in Evanston, including the Northwestern University campus. Divvy is operated by Motivate International, Inc. Subsequently, the city was named a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists, and Northwestern was named a Bicycle Friendly University.

FOCUS ON DOWNTOWN

The life of Special Service Area #4, originally created by the City Council in 1987 to provide downtown marketing and management services, was extended in 2007 for another twelve years, and Evmark's name was formally changed in 2009 to become Downtown Evanston, a non-profit corporation of property and business owners. The current Executive Director is Annie Coakley, preceded by Carolyn Dellutri, Diane Williams, Bridget Lane, and Terrence Jenkins.

In 2013 the City received a \$50,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to study the feasibility of a potential arts corridor in the downtown. The completed study recommended three sites along Chicago Avenue and Davis Street for venues serving the needs of performing arts and their audiences. In 2014 Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl formed the Downtown Performing Arts Center Task Force to explore options for achieving this goal, and in 2015 a site at the southeast corner of Benson Avenue and Clark Street was proposed. Adding momentum to this concept, the Northlight Theater Company expressed an interest in moving back to Evanston from its Skokie venue. The City continues to explore means to make this a reality.

For several decades the complex intersection of Emerson Street, Ridge Avenue and Green Bay Road (above which is the Metra viaduct) has challenged traffic engineers and the general public. In response to this challenge, the City made public in early 2016 a plan to rebuild this intersection, which forms the northwest gateway to downtown. Construction was started in May and the project was essentially completed by the end of the year. Now, as in the case of many other major public improvements, the City has committed government funding for public art associated with the intersection renovation. The Evanston Arts Council issued a Request for Proposals and selected a design submitted by Warren Langley, an Australian artist, whose works are known for using light and glass and often undergo transformations from night to day. His piece is called "Stitch" because it stitches Evanston neighborhoods together with downtown. The cost, including installation, is \$85,000. It was installed in August, 2018.

EVMARK SSA#4 BECOMES DOWNTOWN EVANSTON

Created as Evmark in 1987, Downtown Evanston provides marketing and management services to the downtown. A key responsibility is physical maintenance, including supervision of sidewalk cleaning, trash collection, litter removal, landscaping maintenance and seasonal plantings.



FOUNTAIN SQUARE VISIONING

In 2014 the City contracted with Teska Associates, Inc. to carry out a process of envisioning the future of Fountain Square with substantial public input by all age groups, involving listening sessions, workshops, design charrettes, etc. Eventually, the planners and landscape architects at Teska Associates produced four alternative design concepts expressing the desires of those participants, each emphasizing different priorities for public use and amenity. For example,

“Substantial public input by all age groups, produced four alternative design concepts expressing the desires of those participants.”

one alternative emphasized a “family-friendly venue” (children included). A second alternative emphasized a “green plaza”. A third alternative emphasized “a community event venue”, and

a fourth alternative emphasized “a pedestrian-friendly space”. A final workshop was held for participants to “vote” on their favorite concept. In late 2015 the City issued a “Request for Proposals” to design firms around the country, leading to the selection of one design team to prepare a final design to be implemented in 2017 with municipal funds remaining in the Washington National TIF Project budget. That team was headed by Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. and included Teska Associates, Inc. and Waterworx Fountain Designers.



Above: Various engagement exercises were undertaken during the Fountain Square Visioning work conducted by Teska Associates. (Image credit: Teska Associates, Inc.)

In April, 2016 a public workshop was held to invite comments on two advanced Fountain Square concepts, and in June another public meeting was held to present a “preferred” design and gain public input prior to the detailed design phase. Design approval was obtained from the City Council in the fall so that construction could begin in early 2017 and be completed prior to the expiration of the Washington National Tax Increment Finance District.

SALE OF CITY PARKING LOT

In July, 2016 the City Council voted to authorize the City Manager to negotiate the potential sale of the parking lot (1714-1720 Chicago Avenue), east of the library and north of the Women's Club building, for possible office building development. Bidding on the property was set to begin at \$5 million. Several developers expressed an interest, but some felt that the price was too high, given the restrictions on land use, height, etc. Plans were presented to the Evanston Economic Development Committee in November by Gregory Stec and Bruce Larson and their partner, Conor Commercial, for a 14-story office building with a 20-foot front yard setback, ground-level retail space, and three levels of parking for 124 cars. The proposal was thought to be too large for the site. Conor Development withdrew from the project. Stec and Larson proceeded to revise the proposal to 11-stories with Evanston architect Paul Janicki's design assistance in exchange for a reduced selling price of \$4 million. The City Council responded by voting to terminate discussions on this proposal.

“Recent decisions and new developer proposals for high-rise projects have caused significant concern among some citizens.”

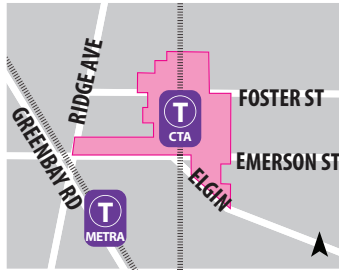


Above: 1714-1720 Chicago Avenue (Image credit: Evanston RoundTable); 831 Emerson (image credit: Evanston RoundTable)

In May, 2017, however, the City Council voted to reverse the previous vote and authorized the City Manager to negotiate a contract to sell the parking lot to the developers subject to agreeable terms, including design and price. The sale occurred on September 25. This decision was not without opposition from some citizens concerned with its impact on adjacent properties, specifically the Evanston Women's Club and the Francis Willard House Museum. Submission of final design plans by the developer, review and City Council action are anticipated in 2018.

DOWNTOWN NORTH PLAN

The area in pink below is the new area primarily north of Emerson that was suggested as an addition to the downtown plan.

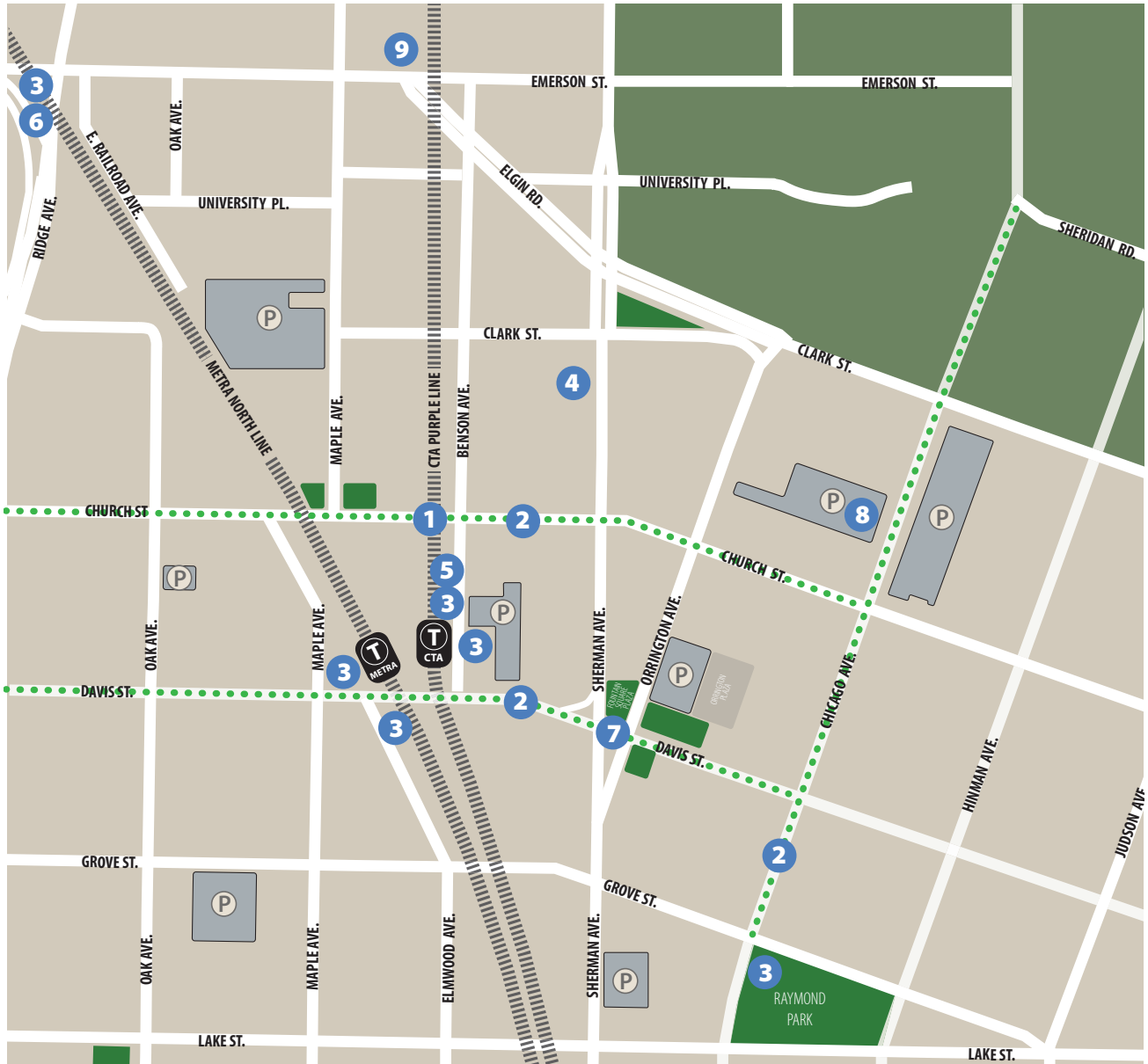


DOWNTOWN NORTH

Controversy also surrounded a developer's proposal to build a stepped 12, 11 and 9-story complex at 831 Emerson Street. Many neighbors opposed the project, because of its height and because it was north of Emerson and Clark Streets, which had heretofore been the dividing line between downtown and the residential neighborhood north of it. It was rejected by the City, but on September 26, 2016 Mark Muenzer, the City's Director of Community Development, presented a proposal to modify the City's 2009 Downtown Plan by adding an area north of Emerson and a small triangular area south of Emerson to the Downtown Plan. The Downtown North Plan was approved by the Plan Commission, but the City Council did not take formal action on the plan itself, rather focusing its attention on the specific developer proposal.

A new plan for the 831 Emerson Street project was submitted to the City by Focus Development in January, 2017. A 9-story rental apartment building was approved by City staff on March 2, sending the project to the City Council for a final decision. Approval was granted in June, subject to a 3.5 foot setback from the front property line and a \$2.4 million payment from Focus Development to the city's affordable housing fund. Construction began in January, 2018. Five months later, on an adjacent site, the Cook County Housing Authority presented preliminary plans for an 11-story addition to its Perlman Apartments (110 units) located at 1900 Sherman Avenue. The new 80-unit building would serve seniors and the disabled.

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 2007-2018



- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 CHURCH STREET CTA VIADUCTS | 6 EMERSON, RIDGE, GREENBAY INTERSECTION |
| 2 DEDICATED BIKEWAYS | 7 FOUNTAIN SQUARE |
| 3 PUBLIC ART | 8 PUBLIC PARKING LOT SALE |
| 4 PROPOSED NORTHLIGHT THEATER | 9 DOWNTOWN NORTH PLAN |
| 5 DIVVY BIKE RENTAL | |

Chapter 3

PRIVATE SECTOR

Almost overnight the “Great Recession” generated a threat to existing businesses and employment, and resulted in a drying up of private sector real estate investment. It challenged the whole concept of and financial incentive for home (especially condominium) ownership. A few projects which had already received approval from the City and had financing continued to be built, e.g. the Winthrop Club at 1567 Maple Avenue Street, completed in 2009 (15 stories, 98 condos). The project was one of only six in the U.S. to receive a “Gold” designation from LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). The other major project was the Mather Lifeways Retirement Community south building, completed in 2009 and connected to the north building by a pedestrian concourse under Davis Street. Together, the two high-rise buildings provide 241 retirement homes of various sizes and designs, plus long-term care facilities, gardens and numerous other amenities.



From left: Winthrop Club at 1567 Maple Ave; 1717 Ridge Avenue

Roszak/ADC declared Chapter 7 bankruptcy in 2009 after completing two of the four planned condo buildings in its Sienna PUD project. This brought to an end the surge of new condominium (ownership) construction in the downtown. Eventually, the balance of the site at 1717 Ridge Avenue was acquired by Focus Development in 2011 and was developed for 174 rental apartments in 8-story buildings (including 198 parking spaces) designed by Booth-Hansen, architects. It opened in 2014.

Other fall-out from the recession resulted in the expiration of the Klutznick-Focus planned unit development agreement with the City for the Fountain Square block. The developer requested a three-year extension on the deadline, but when it became public that the developer's options on the real estate properties in the block had expired and, therefore, it had "no ownership interest" in the project, the City denied the extension. Without question, however, this premier block will, sooner or later, be redeveloped and has the potential to become the "centerpiece" of downtown.

"This premier block will, sooner or later, be redeveloped and has the potential to become the 'centerpiece' of downtown."

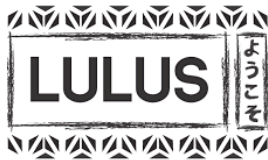
In 2007 Cameel Halim, an Evanston real estate investor, proposed and received approval from the City of Evanston for a Museum of Time (clocks) and Glass to be located at 1560 Oak Avenue, the site of an existing house of the Catholic Women's Club of Evanston, designated "historic". The museum design proposed by architects Adam Wilmot and Donald Kavin was to restore the house and build an addition; it was approved by the City in 2008. However, the home burned down and new plans had to be prepared and approved. The new design emerged, contemporary in nature and four stories in height. Construction was completed and the Hamlin Family Museum of Time and Glass opened in September, 2017, adding a new dimension to downtown.



From left: The Museum of Time and Glass; E2 Building at 1890 Maple Avenue; the E2 parking garage wall mural

TACO DIABLO RETURNS, WITH LULU'S, FIVE & DIME

Many new restaurants opened downtown including the return of Lulu's, Taco Diablo and newcomer Five & Dime which offers popular rooftop dining when weather permits.



In 2009 Carroll Properties requested revisions to its planned unit development proposal for a condo building at 1890 Maple Avenue, but in 2013 Carroll (along with Fifield Companies) submitted to the City yet another revised PUD proposal that would combine the 1890 Maple and 1881 Oak projects. The new proposal (called E2) was designed by FitzGerald Associates Architects and reduced the number of residential units from 541 to 368, the retail space from 21,000 square feet to 4,000 square feet, parking from 541 to 371 spaces, and the height from 185 to 165 feet. All residential units are rental apartments. The project was completed in 2015. Subsequently, an attractive mural was painted on the south façade of its parking structure.

DINING CAPITAL OF THE NORTH SHORE

In August, 2011 the City Council approved a proposed plan for a 500-seat music hall at 1026 Davis Street on a site occupied for many years by Evanston's premier hobby shop, Tom Thumb. The project was never built. But in 2015 Martin Cless and Dan Kelch received City approval and constructed a new building on this site to accommodate three restaurants (Lulu's, Taco Diablo and Five & Dime) plus a fitness center called Spenga.

Across the street, on the corner of Davis and Oak, a building housing the original Taco Diablo and a Chinese restaurant (Pineyard) burned down in 2014. A new building was constructed in 2015 to accommodate new businesses (a boxing studio and an art gallery). Both of these projects opened in 2016. Around the corner, at 1615 Oak Avenue, Smylie Brothers Brewing Company opened a popular beer hall and restaurant, echoing a current trend of local micro-breweries popping up throughout the Chicago area and the U.S. Just to the north of Smylie Brothers, Amy Morton opened her second upscale



From left: The rooftop deck and dining area at 1026 Davis Street; Smylie Brothers Brewing Company, 1615 Oak Avenue

restaurant in downtown, The Barn, located in a renovated old barn with access off the alley between Church Street and Davis Street. Together, these new eating and drinking places create a strong western anchor to the downtown and enhance Evanston's reputation as the "Dining Capital of the North Shore". Downtown now has over 90 eating places, according to Downtown Evanston. Fifty-four of them offer full dining services.

ROOFTOPS

Once occupied by Walgreens in the 1970s and then by Borders Books in the 1980s and 1990s, the 1629 Orrington Avenue building remained vacant in the early 2000s. But, in 2012 it was renovated at the cost of \$5 million to become the home of Bright Horizons Daycare, including 23 classrooms serving over 300 children ages 1-6 years. A key feature of this facility is its rooftop playground.

Throughout downtown, rooftop uses of private properties have proliferated over time, beginning decades ago with the outdoor terrace of the Orrington Hotel's top floor, an extraordinary experience on a fine summer night. More recently, rooftop swimming pools at the Holiday Inn hotel and the Park Evanston residential tower, landscaped balconies at Optima residences, rooftop terraces at The Mather north and south buildings (offering exciting views of the Chicago skyline, Lake Michigan, and Northwestern University), and the new Five & Dime restaurant on Davis Street are other examples, but not the only ones. Expect to see even more of these in the future.



From left: Rooftop deck at The Mather South building; rooftop playground for children; Optima Horizons on Benson Street

In 2013 the new owner of the North Shore Retirement Hotel at 1611-1629 Chicago Avenue (Horizon Realty Group) proposed major renovation of the existing building, a new 8-story addition on the north side, and a new name – The Merion. Approved by the City Council, ground breaking for the new addition (designed by John Myefski Architects and featuring 63 furnished new apartments) occurred in 2014 and it was completed in 2016. Down the street at 1515 Chicago Avenue the Janko Group LLC and Lanko Hospitality received approval from the City in 2014 for a new, 8-story, extended-stay Hyatt House hotel with 118 rooms and 35 parking spaces, designed by SCB Architecture. The hotel opened in May, 2016.



From left: 1611-1629 Chicago Avenue; the new Hyatt House building on Chicago Avenue; 1571 Maple Avenue

Recovery from the recession was further evidenced by a proposal from Centrum Partners LLC for an apartment building at 1571 Maple Avenue with retail space fronting on Davis Street, approved by the City Council in 2015 and completed in 2017. The building, designed by Condor Partners LLC, has 11 stories (123 ft.) and accommodates 101 rental units, but it only provides 12 on-site parking spaces because of limited space and the project's proximity to the Davis Street Transportation Center. One hundred and one additional parking spaces will be rented from the City in its Maple Avenue parking structure.

PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Private educational institutions have also had an influence on downtown during the past decade. In 2004 Northwestern University quietly acquired the 1800 Sherman office building, taking it off the property tax rolls, much to the chagrin of many in the community. Back in the 1970s and 1980s the City had been responsible for the redevelopment of this block (formerly a municipal parking lot) in order to expand the local economy and tax base. Northwestern reached an agreement with the City to make a financial contribution of \$2 million over the next three years to the City and its two school districts, but will be exempt from property taxes as long as it owns the property.

The issue persisted over the years when the University acquired additional tax paying private properties in the former downtown Research Park and elsewhere. As a result, the City and the University entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in 2017 stating that should the University continue to own or purchase additional property tax paying properties in the former Research Park, it will pay to the City and the school districts annually an amount equivalent to the local property taxes that would otherwise be payable to these entities.

Of even greater influence on the diversity of downtown, perhaps, is the entry of two private high schools. In 2011 Roycemore School (founded in 1915 and currently serving 350 pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 students) moved from its long-occupied buildings on Orrington Avenue and Lincoln Street to the building and site formerly occupied by the Methodist Board of Pensions at the southwest corner of Davis and Ridge.

In 2013-2014, a new privately funded high school (Beacon Academy) based on Montessori education principles, opened in leased space with 40 students on the upper floors above businesses in the 600 block of Davis Street. Its popularity attracted 80 students for the 2014-2015 school year. Not only was this in response to the reputation of Montessori education, but also to the mission of the Academy which intends to use the downtown and its human resources as a learning environment. The Academy forecasts an enrollment of 200 in the near future and has received City approval as a "special use" under the zoning ordinance to move into leased space in the Rotary International building at 1574 Sherman Avenue, beginning in 2016.

NEW SCHOOLS IN THE DOWNTOWN

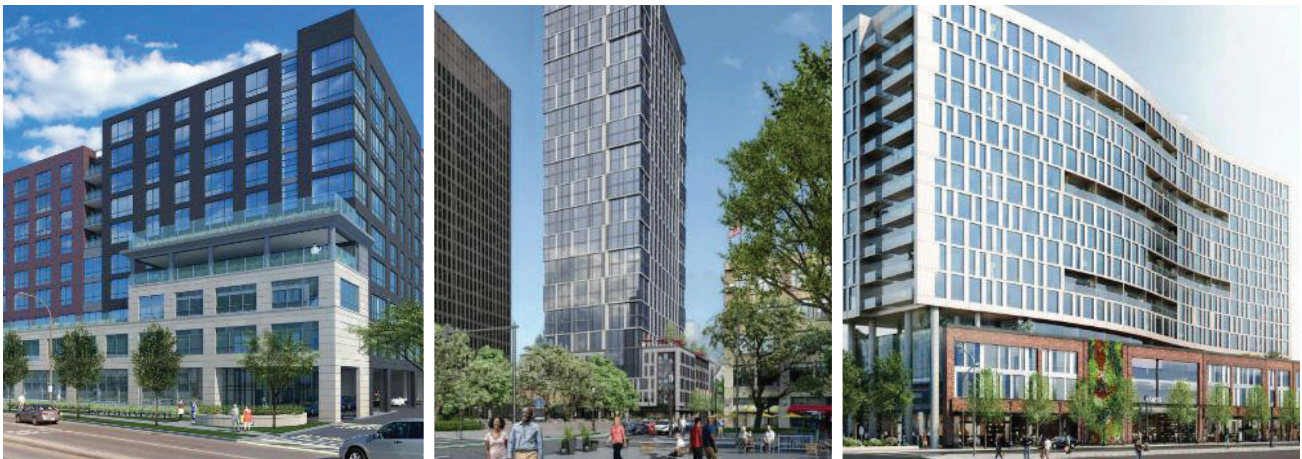
Independent Roycemore School and the new Beacon Academy have both opened in downtown Evanston. Beacon is a new Montessori school and Roycemore relocated from north Evanston where their lease with Northwestern University expired in 2012.



INCREASING DEMAND FOR SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES

At the other end of the age spectrum, Downtown Evanston has also become the “Retirement Center” of the North Shore, attracting yet another proposal for senior housing, this being located at 1815 Ridge Avenue. The site at this address is currently vacant. The developer envisions a 10-story, 163 unit residential building on the triangular site formerly occupied for many decades by the National School Towel Service, Inc. Its building was badly damaged by a fire in July, 2015. The new plan includes 102 independent living units, 31 assisted living units and 30 memory-care units, 67 vehicular parking spaces, and 50 bicycle parking spaces. The planned unit development was approved by the City Council in July, 2016, but construction has not yet begun.

For decades the underutilized drive-through Chase Bank site on Davis Street (part of the 1960’s State National Bank Planned Unit Development) and the vacant lot east of it (attached to the historic University Building site at the corner of Davis and Chicago) have for various reasons defied the development momentum of downtown. However, in December, 2015 Vermillion Enterprises LLC submitted to the City an application for approval of a planned unit development to construct a 27-story building with 217 residential units and retail space on the ground floor at 601-611 Davis Street, while keeping the University Building. The proposal lingered without action throughout 2016. However, in March, 2017 Vermillion introduced a new plan for a 33-story residential building on the same site with 318 rental apartments, 179 parking spaces and 6,700 sq. ft. of retail space. City staff and the Plan Commission recommended rejection of the plan for the 601 Davis Street project as proposed. The City Council’s Development Committee voted 6-1 to reject the proposal on January 22, 2018. The Council as a whole refused to debate that decision.



From left: 1815 Ridge Avenue; 601-611 Davis Street by Vermillion Enterprises; 1450 Sherman Avenue by Albion Residential
(Image credits: Evanston RoundTable)

The following month Albion Residential made public a proposal, designed by Hartshorne Plunkard Architecture for a 16-story building on a 36,000 sq. ft. site at 1450 Sherman Avenue (across the street from the Holiday Inn) which included the popular Tommy Nevins and Prairie Moon restaurants. After controversial public hearings the City Council approved a 15-story project by a narrow 5-4 vote. The building will have 6,800 square feet of businesses on the first floor, 200 parking spaces and 273 apartments (15 units being “affordable housing”). Subsequently, both restaurants have closed.

NORTHLIGHT THEATER COMPLEX

There is an old saying, which was spoken often in the wet year of 2017: “When it rains it pours”. As if previous proposals were not enough to keep city officials and staff busy and invite public input, representatives from Farpoint Development LLC and the Northlight Theater (founded in Evanston, but currently located in Skokie) unveiled in September, 2017 a stunning proposal for the 1700 block of Sherman Avenue. This proposal would include two live performance venues for Northlight Theater flanked by a 37-story, 395-foot tower building composed of a boutique hotel, 152 rental apartments, ground floor retail spaces and a 258 space parking garage, making it the tallest building in Evanston, in fact between Chicago and Milwaukee. The architect was Skidmore, Owings and Merrill.

Throughout the fall and winter of 2017-2018 Farpoint met with numerous local organizations and citizens to explain the proposal and receive feedback prior to submitting an application for formal review by City authorities. It became clear that the community supported the concept of Northlight Theater in Evanston once again,

NORTHLIGHT THEATER CONSIDERS A RETURN

Originally formed in a decommissioned elementary school in Evanston, the group moved to Skokie when the school was put back into use in 1990. The group has experienced tremendous growth and reputation; it is now said to be considering a move back to Evanston.



Above: The Northlight Theatre development proposal by Farpoint Development, designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. (Image credit: Evanston Now)

even in the downtown, but not necessarily at this location and not in a project of this scale or height. The dislocation of so many active local businesses was another concern.



**“We want Northlight Theatre Company
back in Evanston.”**

- Mayor Steve Hagerty

Funding the theater project itself without municipal investment was also an issue and required the large scale and building height which characterized the private real estate project. Recognizing this dilemma, the City Manager in January informed the City Council of other public-private options, but these also became a “red flag” to some citizens. In late February, 2018 Farpoint and Northlight announced that they were withdrawing their previously announced plans for the site and would consider more agreeable options.

At the March, 2018 “State of the City” luncheon sponsored by the Evanston Chamber of Commerce, Mayor Steve Hagerty stated, “If we want our city to remain the attractive, vibrant and special place that it is, we can’t stop looking for opportunities.” He added “We want Northlight back in Evanston.”

Adding to the excitement of September, 2017, it was announced that Cameal Hamlin, owner of the Time and Glass Museum, purchased the King Home (now closed) across Oak Avenue. His intention is to extensively upgrade the property for conversion into apartments or a hotel. For decades the six-story brick building and garden had been affiliated with the Presbyterian Homes retirement community as a facility for elderly single men.

In October the City announced receipt of a proposal from Dallas-based Trammell Crow Company for a 17-story “active seniors” residential tower with 169 units (including 17 affordable units) and parking facilities at 1727 Oak Avenue in the parking lot north of the existing 1007 Church Street office building. The project was approved by the City Council in late May, 2018.

Also in October, the owners of the Merion announced that they are planning to construct a 25-story building at 1617 Chicago Avenue. It will accommodate 215 apartments, 149 parking spaces, and 3,691 sq. ft. of ground floor commercial space; an alternative might be condominiums. The building would be directly across the street from the 24-story Park Evanston building.

Never in the city’s history has so much new development been proposed in a one-year period of time. Virtually all of it exceeds the existing by-right zoning regulations and requires a rigorous Planned Development review process by the City which allows for a great deal of negotiation over height, parking, affordable housing, contributions for other “public benefits”, and design.

Despite the groundswell of recent and proposed investments in new buildings, especially residential and office, the viability of retail uses on the ground floor continues to struggle, both a national and a local commercial trend. For example, recent closures in the Sherman Plaza block include Levi’s, Five Guys, Jos. A. Bank, Office Max/Office Depot, and North Face. A counterpoint to this trend was the March, 2018 grand opening of a new, 27,400 sq. ft. “small format” Target store in Sherman Plaza that also includes groceries and a CVS pharmacy and Uncle Dan’s Outfitters which has moved into the corner unit formerly occupied by The North Face.

TARGET OPENS

Aimed at students and downtown residents and workers, the small format store carries beauty, health and personal care products; apparel and accessories; dorm and apartment items; and a grocery section with fresh produce and grab-and-go items. It also has a CVS pharmacy,



Above from left: 1617 Chicago Avenue; Trammell Crow, 1727 Oak Avenue (Image credits: Evanston RoundTable)

PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT SINCE 2007



- 1 WINTHROP CLUB AT 1569 MAPLE
- 2 1717 RIDGE
- 3 MUSEUM OF TIME & GLASS
- 4 E2
- 5 NEW BUSINESSES
- 6 SMYLIES CRAFT BREWERY + THE BARN
- 7 BRIGHT HORIZONS DAYCARE

- 8 THE MERION
- 9 1571 MAPLE AVE
- 10 NORTHLIGHT
- 11 ROYCEMORE SCHOOL
- 12 BEACON ACADEMY
- 13 1815 RIDGE
- 14 601-611 DAVIS ST

- 15 1450 SHERMAN AVE
- 16 1727 OAK AVE
- 17 TARGET
- 18 831 EMERSON
- 19 HYATT HOUSE HOTEL
- 20 1617 CHICAGO AVE

Chapter 4

FOUNTAIN SQUARE

2017 marks the fourth time in the past 142 years (the original fountain was installed in 1876) that Fountain Square has been totally redesigned. The most recent design was constructed in 1976 to celebrate the U.S. bicentennial. After 40 years the City Council decided that costly major maintenance was required and that it made sense to invest in a totally new public space. The cost would be covered substantially by revenues from the Washington National Tax Increment Finance District which expired at the end of 2017.

For over two years a team of consultants worked closely with City staff, a Steering Committee, the American Legion Post 42, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Snell Post 7186, Downtown Evanston, and downtown neighbors. Numerous public meetings were held to envision future alternatives, establish goals and priorities, and build consensus on a preferred concept enhancing the pedestrian experience and reducing the impact of traffic. This entailed bringing the elevation of adjacent roadways up to the elevation of surrounding sidewalks, thereby creating a “shared” or “curbless” space that would be flexible and permit various configurations for different kinds of public events.

REDESIGNED, INTERACTIVE FOUNTAIN SQUARE

The final design concept reduces the roadways and expands plaza spaces for community gathering. The original curb line is depicted by the red dashed line below and on page 23.



Above from left: Teska held numerous open houses that allowed Evanston residents to view and comment on the plans.



Above top: Daytime rendering of the southern plaza looking south from Davis Street. **Above bottom:** Nighttime rendering of the Northern plaza looking South from along Sherman Avenue. (images credit: Teska Associates, Inc.)

According to Jodi Mariano, Principal Urban Designer for Teska Associates, Inc., other key elements of the plaza spaces, both north and south of Davis Street include:

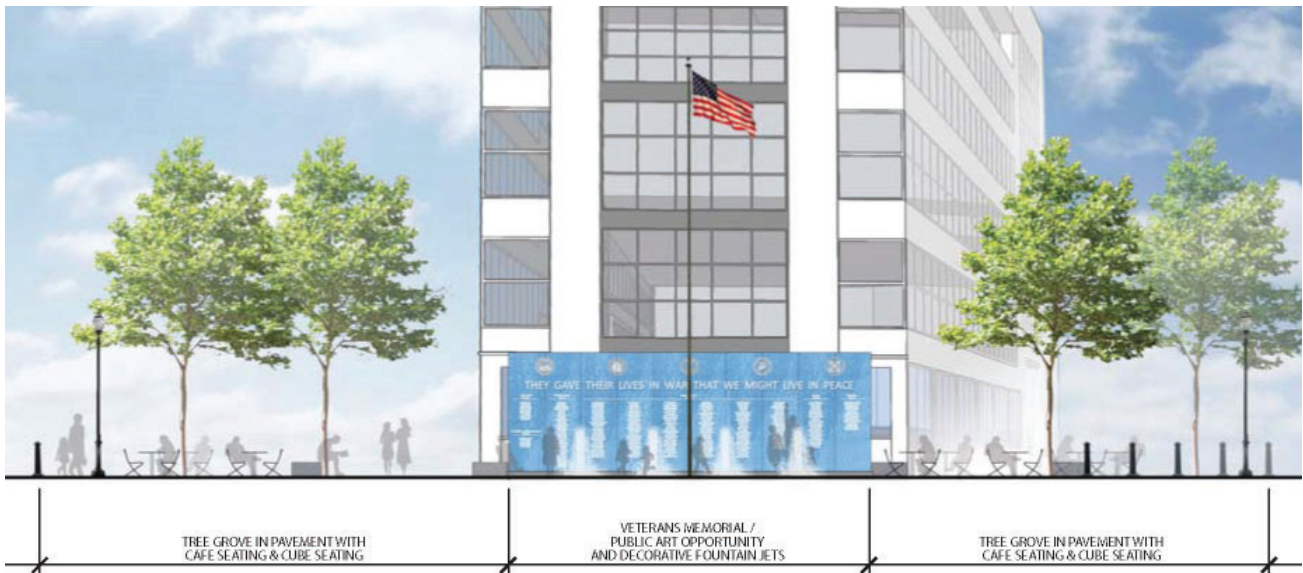
- A glass memorial wall with specialty lighting commemorates Evanston’s fallen heroes previously named on three brick columns with bronze plaques; five new bronze plaques are mounted on the base of the glass wall; original plaques were returned to veterans organizations;
- Perimeter roadways defined by a rhythm of decorative bollards and Evanston standard planter pots;
- A signature water fountain in the north plaza which includes a grid of 20 jets flush with the pavement that are choreographed to display a variety of patterns, heights and internally lit color displays;
- Tree groves and cube benches around the perimeter of the north plaza;
- Specialty festoon lighting in the enlarged south plaza;
- Movable tables and chairs to allow various configurations of seating, thereby encouraging visitors to create their own more intimate spaces;
- Holiday tree area and lawn panel in the south plaza to celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa.
- Sustainable features, such as permeable paving, LED lighting, recycled and repurposed materials.

FINAL DESIGN



A

VIEW LOOKING NORTH TO FOUNTAIN SQUARE PLAZA



Above: Looking north to the Fountain Square Memorial Wall from the southern plaza. (Image credit: Teska Associates, Inc.)

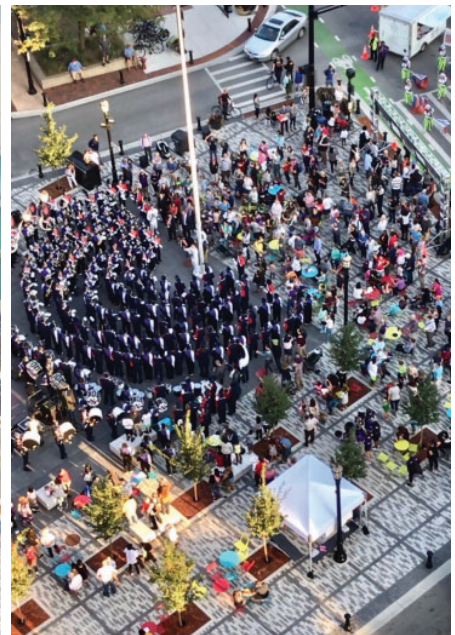
The Fountain Square Renovations is a project about placemaking and the revitalization of Downtown Evanston's central gathering space. **Fountain Square has historically been a place for the community to gather.** As an engaged community, Evanstonians gather together to celebrate, to remember, to speak out in times of political unrest. Veterans memorial ceremonies, community art festivals, Northwestern University events, political rallies, and holiday celebrations occur in tandem with day to day use and small gatherings.

This project was managed and is maintained by dedicated staff and visionaries at the City of Evanston Public Works Department, including Public Works Director Dave Stoneback, City Engineer Lara Biggs and Project Manager Stefanie Levine.

The Fountain Square Renovations project included the reconstruction of the roadways, sidewalks and plaza spaces located along Sherman and Orrington Avenues between Grove Street and north of Davis Street. Construction sequencing was organized to improve the sidewalks adjacent to businesses (completed summer 2017), followed by the south plaza (completed fall 2017), and the north plaza (completed fall 2018).

FOUNTAIN SQUARE BY THE NUMBERS

For the dedicated team of engineers, fountain designers, fabricators and installers, Fountain Square could be summed up by a list of things, including 9,500 square feet of permeable pavers, 97 bollards, 42 trees, 40 sets of bistro tables and chairs, 10 cube benches, 2 drinking fountains, 10 festoon poles with string lights, 20 fountain jets and 1 glass memorial wall. However, for the people who use the space daily and during fests and events, this has become the place to meet friends for lunch, to watch kids splash in the fountain, to read the names of Evanston's heroes, to sit in the grass on a sunny day, to dance, to play and to reflect.



Above: Views of Fountain Square (Image credit: Booden Photography, Inc.); **Page 26, 27:** Views of Fountain Square (image credit: Downtown Evanston, Teska Associates, Inc.)

EVENTS AND FESTIVALS: IF YOU PLAN IT, THEY WILL COME

Fountain Square's success is attributed to more than best practices for urban design and a thoughtful selection of materials and products. Throughout the planning process, the City of Evanston has partnered with the Downtown Evanston organization, directed by Annie Coakley, to ensure that the plaza design supports community events and fests. Community events conducted to date include: Thursday Night Live; We Love Evanston; Northwestern Kits, Cats and Kids; Get Fit Fridays; Knitting; Northwestern University Homecoming; Bollywood Dancing; Dance is My Everything (D.I.M.E.); Anti-Violence Rallies; and many others.

Located beneath the pavement, 20 fountain jets are programmed with light and water to run a variety of displays that change over the course of the day and during City holidays. Specialty lighting effects in the fountain are programmed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Northwestern University and Evanston Township High School Homecoming Events, Cancer Awareness, Halloween and others.



FOUND SPACE: A PLACE FOR PEOPLE

Thanks to the Evanston Historical Society and Evanston RoundTable, we can imagine Fountain Square’s earliest days. In 1876, the intersection of Davis and Sherman was a place to witness a new idea for running water! As the community evolved, the plaza followed. Surrounding roadways were paved, buildings grew, a Veteran’s Memorial was constructed, new fountains bubbled, and plaza features were added.

Today’s fountain is located below the pavement to allow people to move freely; curbsless streets provide settings for fests and events; the glass Veteran’s Memorial wall inspires reflection; and movable tables and chairs encourage people to make their own spaces.

Throughout Evanston’s history, Fountain Square has evolved to meet the needs of an ever changing and vibrant community. During the outreach and visioning activities of 2014, the community rallied behind concepts for a gathering space that is universally accessible, respectful and playful. At today’s Fountain Square, people are the main event.

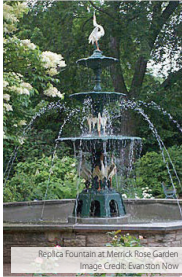
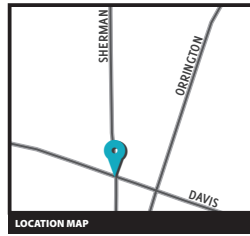


FIVE CORNERS

During the U.S. centennial year, Fountain Square was located at the intersection of Davis Street and Sherman Avenue. This site was previously referred to as "Five Corners". When the fountain was dedicated during the centennial ceremony on July 4, 1876, many Evanston residents had not yet seen running water. Today, a replica fountain is located in the Merrick Rose Garden at Oak Avenue and Lake Street.

Text adapted from: Evanston Roundtable Magazine

1876



Replica Fountain at Merrick Rose Garden
Image Credit: Evanston Now



Image Credit: Evanston Historical Society

HISTORIC SUMMARY

FOUNTAIN SQUARE RENOVATIONS
CITY OF EVANSTON



URBAN FORM TAKES SHAPE

As Evanston experienced significant growth during the 1920s, the City's urban form began to take shape. At this time, the original Fountain Square remained located within a busy roadway intersection. The old City Hall (constructed in 1892, at left) and the James Rood building are visible in the background. Paved roadways and sidewalks are pictured as well as traffic signals and globe street lights.

Text adapted from: Chicago Tribune archives, Evanston Public Library

1931

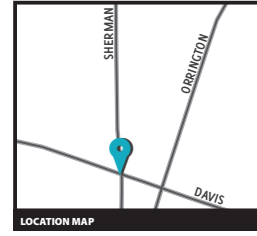


Image Credit: Tribune Archives



Image Credit: Evanston Historical Society

HISTORIC SUMMARY

FOUNTAIN SQUARE RENOVATIONS
CITY OF EVANSTON



MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

In 1946, the earlier Fountain Square was declared a traffic hazard and removed from the intersection. After World War II, the City explored multiple ways to honor local servicemen and women. An appointed War Memorial Committee worked with the City to construct a War Memorial Fountain. Designed by Hubert Burnham, the Memorial Fountain included a three-basin fountain and memorial plaques. At this time, the Fountain was moved from the roadway intersection to a sidewalk plaza.

Text adapted from: Evanston Roundtable Magazine

1950

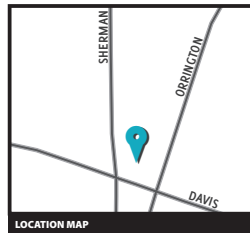


Image Credit: Evanston Photographic Studios, Inc.



Image Credit: Evanston Historical Society

HISTORIC SUMMARY

FOUNTAIN SQUARE RENOVATIONS
CITY OF EVANSTON



THE PLAZA

The War Memorial Fountain was replaced with a new Fountain Square Plaza (1976, Barton Aschman Associates). Orrington and Sherman Avenues were converted to one-way streets. The Plaza incorporated a new veteran's memorial, fountain basins, landscaping and public open spaces. Memorial plaques were incorporated into three vertical brick columns. Fountain basins and planters were arranged to accommodate intimate and group seating, small community events and festivals and strolling thru the plaza.

Text adapted from: Evanston Public Library, Downtown Evanston Revitalized 1956-2006, R. Teska

1976

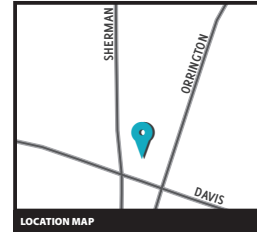


Image Credit: R. Teska



Image Credit: Evanston Historical Society

HISTORIC SUMMARY

FOUNTAIN SQUARE RENOVATIONS
CITY OF EVANSTON



HISTORIC SUMMARY
FOUNTAIN SQUARE RENOVATIONS

City of Evanston, IL


APRIL 28, 2016



Chapter 5

PUSH FORWARD/ PUSH BACK

There is no precedent in the history of Downtown Evanston for such a volume of development that, if approved, would have substantial influence on the future of the community and, specifically, its downtown. Obviously, there are legitimate reasons, among which are: a strong economy; Evanston is a desirable place to invest; the recession of 2007-2012 produced a backlog of such potential investment; and the fact that City leaders recognize the need to enhance the city's tax base and have sent welcome signals to developers. But, at what price to the heritage and character of the community? It comes as no surprise, therefore, that there is "push back" from elements of the community while at the same time there are other elements who wish to "push forward", even into a substantially new era.

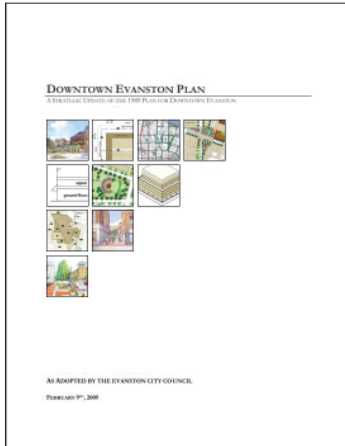


"Now a third period is emerging: a period of sustainability and, possibly, choices that will herald a different type of community."

One could claim that the city and its downtown have experienced two macro-periods of development, the first being the first six decades of steady growth up to the mid-1950s, and the second being a period including setbacks leading to a committed revitalization effort (the next six plus decades). During the second period the entire community has faced challenges such as: evolving urban-suburban residential patterns; competing suburban shopping centers and office-industrial parks; increasing health and education requirements; several minor and major recessions; canceled private projects; and need for wise leadership. Evanston and its downtown have survived and prospered. Now a third period is emerging: a period of sustainability and, possibly, choices that will herald a different type of community anchored by an expanded, multifunctional, higher density urban core; a growing world class university, and a substantially new generation of residents and leaders who have not experienced the first two periods of development and have little commitment to their planning and design legacy. Decisions made in late 2010s will largely shape this future.

THE 2009 EVANSTON DOWNTOWN PLAN

The Evanston Downtown Plan completed in 2009 has met with some resistance as it did not anticipate the willingness of residents to accept development of a higher density.



On the “push forward” side of the coin the City of Evanston staff has noted that Evanston ranks 31st among the 56 Cook County municipalities that impose a home rule sales tax in the amount of money per capita that the tax raised during the state’s 2016-2017 fiscal year. Lacking major opportunities to expand sales tax revenues in downtown and other parts of the predominantly residential community, real estate property taxes become the primary source of increased revenue. The high percentage of public and institutional property (tax exempt) in the city exacerbates the problem. Hence, the importance of downtown. It came as no surprise, therefore, that on October 2 the City Council rejected calls from citizens to enact a moratorium on tall buildings. The “Evanston Roundtable” reported that the “2009 Downtown Plan Has Few Supporters on Council”, in part because it did not envision the extent of current development proposals, especially density and height. Also, many citizens are now willing to support more tax revenue from new development, and the business community tends to encourage more development, arguing that more downtown residents, jobs and visitors mean more downtown business.

On the “push back” side of the coin, there are those who believe that the 2009 Downtown Plan, arrived at only after substantial citizen participation, should be respected, giving greater importance to the traditional character of the downtown. Stated are concerns regarding traffic and parking, loss of lake views, wind tunnels, shadows, affordable housing, building design (including building materials), mini-apartments, public art and need for more public benefits.

Chapter 6

THE FUTURE

Clearly, despite the pause caused by the “Great Recession”, Downtown Evanston has regained its momentum largely consistent with the optimistic forecast given on pp. 94-96 of **Downtown Evanston Revitalized, 1956-2006**. This forecast was based on characteristics exhibited by the community-at-large, e.g.:

- Evanston is a “Third Wave” city
- Evanston evidences “The Experience Economy”
- Evanston, especially its downtown, attracts “The Creative Class”
- Evanston no longer wants its downtown to be like a shopping center; shopping centers want to be like Downtown Evanston
- Potential, new-generation community leaders are everywhere

In many respects Downtown Evanston is now and in the future will take on the character of a diverse, pedestrian-oriented and transit-oriented “full service urban village” with a significant resident population while still serving as the “dining, entertainment and hospitality center” of the North Shore. However, it is unlikely to become, once again, the destination shopping district it was up to the 1960s or the “Headquarters City” it was in the 1970s-1990s. Rather, smaller-scale retailers and services will occupy ground floor space and the offices of not-for-profit organizations will expand. This is likely to include more activities related directly to Northwestern University.

Public investment in downtown may not be as robust in the coming decade for one basic reason: the Downtown II TIF District expired at the end of 2009 and the Washington National TIF District expired at the end of 2017, having increased in Equalized Assessed Valuation from \$25.7 million in 1994 to \$72.7 million in 2016 and \$85.6 million in 2017. Hence, the City will no longer have the TIF financial resources generated by these two TIF Districts to incentivize private investment or pay for public improvements. Together, these two TIF Districts alone have evidenced an increase of \$203.1 million in the assessed values of downtown properties. This was exactly what the State of Illinois legislature intended when it enacted this legislation in the 1970s and exactly what the City of Evanston envisioned when it put this public financing technique to work in 1985.

No wonder Downtown Evanston has been ranked among the 10 Best Downtowns in the U.S. by Livability.com.



2018 EVANSTON CITY COUNCIL

Stephen H. Hagerty
Mayor

Judy Fiske
1st Ward

Peter Braithwaite
2nd Ward

Melissa A. Wynne
3rd Ward

Donald N. Wilson
4th Ward

Robin Rue Simmons
5th Ward

Thomas M. Suffredin
6th Ward

Eleanor Revelle
7th Ward

Ann Rainey
8th Ward

Cicely L. Fleming
9th Ward

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Teska Honored with Daniel H. Burnham Distinguished Service Award

Robert B. Teska, founder of Teska Associates, Inc., and co-founder of Business Districts Inc. of Evanston, was recently honored by the 500+ member Ely Chapter of Lambda Alpha International Land Economics Society. The community service award was bestowed



Robert Teska.
*Photo by Genie Lemieux,
Evanston Photographic
Studios*

“for his legacy of work that guides and transforms communities; for advancing planning through leadership of the firm that bears his name; for contributions to professional associations; and for his decades of generous commitment to building and sustaining a vibrant downtown Evanston.”

Mr. Teska’s civic activities in Evanston include service on the City’s Planning Commission; Chair of Evanston’s Busi-

ness District Redevelopment Commission; founder of Design Evanston; and work on the Chamber of Commerce Parking Committee. He is a Charter Member of Evanston Lighthouse Rotary Club, Past President, and former Assistant Governor of Rotary District 6440. He served on the Steering Committee of Leadership Evanston as well as the Mitchell Museum of the American Indian Board of Directors, both as member and Vice President. He has also produced a book, “Downtown Evanston Revitalized,” available on the Internet. He is now working on a 2007-17 supplement.

(Image credit: Evanston RoundTable)

